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ABSTRACT

The 1984 Iowa Farm and Rural Life Poll is summarized in this report. Responses from 1,585 randomly selected Iowa farm families showed that respondents opposed relaxing current state laws limiting foreign investors and non-farm corporations' ownership of farmland; had mixed feelings on absentee ownership, changing banking laws to allow banks to accept land as payment of debt, and organic farming research; and favored debt restructuring via the Harl-Leach proposal, changing the tax code on offsetting nonfarm income, and targeting price supports to smaller family farms. Opinions on 10 items in the 1985 Farm Bill varied widely (developing international markets and lowering interest rates ranked highest). There was moderate to strong support for federal government involvement in 10 areas (promoting international trade and insuring food quality/safety standards ranked highest). Sixty-eight percent supported reducing defense spending to reduce the federal budget deficit. Of nine recent technological developments, four were opposed by at least 20%. Two-thirds felt the financial situation of Iowa farmers was very serious, and voiced concern about local agribusiness, local lenders, and their own farms. Despite problems, farmers were generally satisfied with their occupation; 44% looked forward to retirement, 54% were planning for it, and 34% did not expect to ever retire. (JMM)

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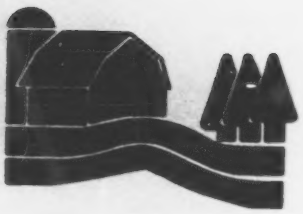
iowa farm and rural life poll



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Summary

Fall 1984

INTRODUCTION

This report summarizes the findings from the fall, 1984 Iowa Farm and Rural Life Poll. The survey, conducted during September and October, includes responses from 1,585 randomly selected Iowa farm families.

The purpose of the poll is to reflect the farm perspective on agricultural issues and rural life concerns. The project helps inform public officials, policy makers, community leaders and the public on state and national issues.

Information from the surveys is available through extension bulletins, news releases, research reports, and special requests. This is the fifth survey in the series conducted by the Iowa State University Cooperative Extension Service and the ISU Agriculture Experiment Station. Our thanks goes to the farm families who take the time to fill out the questionnaires.

Overview

The survey focused on the farm financial situation, issues to be addressed in the 1985 Farm Bill and the role of government in agriculture. The survey also solicited opinions on the federal budget deficit, as well as new technology. Turning to farm family concerns, we asked about job satisfaction, retirement plans, and opinions about retirement.

FINDINGS

Debt Restructuring

One of the most discussed agricultural issues the past few months has been the Harl-Leach proposal on farm debt restructuring. Respondents were asked, "How do you feel about restructuring farmers' debt through government guarantees to private lenders who agree to stretch out loan repayments of heavily indebted farmers? Lenders in turn would reduce the principal owed by 10 to 20 percent. This would be a voluntary program between borrowers, lenders and the federal government which would not involve forgiveness of principal or interest for the borrowers. This is known as the Harl-Leach proposal." Nineteen percent of Iowa farmers strongly support and an additional 37% somewhat support the Harl-Leach farm debt restructuring proposal. Twenty-two percent were uncertain about the proposal. Eleven percent were somewhat opposed and another 11% strongly opposed the Harl-Leach plan.

Prepared by Paul Lasley, Extension sociologist, Department of Sociology and Anthropology. Neil E. Harl, Robert Jolly and Millis Goudy assisted in drafting the questionnaire. The Division of Statistics, Iowa Department of Agriculture, provided valuable assistance to this survey.

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State Land Laws

In response to the decline in farmland values, some people have proposed relaxing current state land ownership laws to encourage outside investors to invest in farmland. Two-thirds of Iowa farmers (68%) were strongly opposed to relaxing current state laws that limit non-resident aliens (foreign investors) from owning farmland (Table 1). An additional 15% somewhat opposed relaxing state restrictions on foreign ownership of farmland. Eleven percent were either

Table 1. Respondents' opinions on agricultural policy issues.

How do you feel about--	Strongly Support	Somewhat Support	Uncertain	Somewhat Oppose	Strongly Oppose
	Percent				
Relaxing current state laws limiting non-resident aliens (foreign investors) from owning farmland	7	4	6	15	68
Relaxing current state laws limiting nonfarm corporations from owning farmland	6	5	6	19	64
Limiting absentee ownership of farmland by individuals	19	21	24	21	15
Relaxing state and federal laws, allowing banks to accept land as payment on debt and to be able to rent or lease the land back to farmers for up to 10 years	15	28	29	12	16
Targeting commodity price supports to family farmers with gross sales of less than $100,000	31	28	17	12	12
Placing limits on the amount of farm losses that nonfarm investors may offset against nonfarm income	67	17	5	4	7
Allocating additional government research monies to assess the feasibility of organic farming methods	15	32	26	16	11

strongly or somewhat supportive of relaxing current laws and six percent were uncertain.

A similar response was found toward relaxing current state laws that limit nonfarm corporations from owning farmland. Sixty-four percent were strongly opposed and 19% were somewhat opposed to relaxing Iowa laws limiting nonfarm corporations from owning farmland. Eleven percent supported relaxing the law and six percent were uncertain.

In summary, there was little support --about 10%--among Iowa farmers to relax state laws that limit foreign investors or nonfarm corporations in owning farmland.

Farmers were divided in their opinions about limiting absentee ownership of farmland by individuals -- 40% supported, 36% opposed and 24% were uncertain (Table 1).

Current state and federal laws limit the length of time that banks can own farmland. Some feel these laws are too restrictive and that banks ought to be able to accept land as payment on debt which they could rent or lease back to farmers for up to 10 years.

Forty-three percent of the respondents (15% strongly, 28% somewhat) support changing the banking laws so banks could accept land as payment on debt and maintain ownership for 10 years. Sixteen percent strongly oppose and 12% somewhat oppose this proposal. Almost one-third (29%) were uncertain about this proposal.

Targeting Support Prices

We asked farmers their opinions on targeting support prices to family farms with gross sales of less than $100,000.

Almost six out of 10 farmers (59%) favored targeting commodity price supports to family farmers with gross sales of less than $100,000. Twenty-four percent were opposed to targeting support prices to the smaller-family farms and 17% were undecided.

Tax Policy

One recurring issue is how current tax laws affect agricultural investments. Some call for federal legislation to limit the amount of farm losses that nonfarm investors may offset against nonfarm income.

Iowa farmers support placing limits on losses that investors can use to offset nonfarm income. Eighty-four percent of the respondents favor changing the tax code -- (67% strongly support it and 17% are somewhat supportive). Eleven percent were opposed to placing limits on farm losses to offset nonfarm income and five percent were unsure.

Organic Farming

How much emphasis should be given to organic farming methods is another issue in the agricultural community and within USDA. Farmers have mixed opinions about support for organic farming methods. Forty-seven percent of Iowa farmers support allocating additional research money to organic farming methods. Nearly one-fourth (26%) were uncertain and 27% opposed spending more money on organic farming methods.

1985 Farm Bill Objectives

Since Congress will draft a new Farm Bill in 1985, farmers were asked what they felt should be the major objectives of the new legislation. Respondents were asked to rank 10 possible objectives of the Farm Bill on a 7-point scale ranging from lowest to highest priority. Table 2 shows the priorities of respondents in percent as well as the mean score for each item. Mean scores indicate the relative ranking for each of the 10 items.

Opinions on the priority of the 10 items in the 1985 Farm Bill varied widely. Developing new international markets was

ranked as the most important objective of the Farm Bill, followed closely by lowering interest rates. About 60% of the respondents gave these two objectives highest priority. Strengthening family farms and protecting agriculture's natural resources received the highest priority by 48% and 44%,respectively.

Moving toward a more free market system, insuring food safety and improving the quality of life in rural communities were given highest priority by about one-third of the respondents. Assisting beginning farmers and providing parity prices were rated as highest priority by about 20% of the respondents.

Keeping food prices at present levels was given lowest priority by almost one-third of the respondents.

It appears the challenge of the new Farm Bill will be to simultaneously achieve the goals identified in Table 2. Under current budget restraints, it will be difficult to meet the divergent expectations. The data presented in Table 2 suggest that nine of the ten items are viewed as important objectives of the 1985 Farm Bill.

Table 2. Objectives of the 1985 farm bill.

	Lowest Priority						Highest Priority	Mean Score
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Objective	percent							
Developing new international markets	2	1	2	7	11	19	58	6.2
Lowering interest rates	3	1	4	9	7	12	64	6.1
Strengthening family farms	2	2	2	11	15	20	48	5.9
Protecting agriculture's natural resources	1	1	3	12	19	20	44	5.8
Moving toward a more free market system	2	2	4	16	17	24	35	5.5
Insuring food safety & quality	4	3	5	16	20	19	33	5.3
Improving the quality of life in rural communities	6	4	5	18	18	17	32	5.2
Assisting beginning farmers	4	6	11	23	18	15	23	4.8
Providing parity prices	11	6	11	23	15	14	20	4.5
Keeping food prices at current levels	28	12	11	21	10	7	11	3.4

Federal Government's Role in Agriculture

One of the continuing discussions among producers, farm organizations and policy makers is the extent to which the federal government should be involved in agriculture. Some groups argue that the federal government should be less involved in agriculture, and others call for more government involvement.

Farmers were asked to give their opinions on 10 areas of federal government involvement in agriculture. Respondents could check either "should not be involved;" "should be moderately involved;" "should be greatly involved" or "uncertain."

There is moderate to strong support for federal government involvement in the 10 areas listed. If the percentages in the "moderately" or "greatly involved" columns are combined, generally at least three-fourths of Iowa farmers support government involvement in the 10 areas (Table 3).

International trade promotion, which was ranked as the highest priority for the 1985 Farm Bill, also was viewed by the largest proportion of farmers as deserving much involvement by the federal government.

Table 3. Opinions on federal government's role in agriculture.

Role	Should not be involved	Moderately involved	Greatly involved	Uncertain
	percent			
Promoting international trade	4	27	66	3
Insuring food quality & safety standards	4	40	54	2
Emergency and disaster relief	3	42	52	3
Preserving small family farms	9	40	48	3
Monitoring outside investments in agriculture	9	35	47	9
Enforcing anti-trust legislation	5	33	44	18
Conducting research on new products	11	48	37	4
Insuring competition in agricultural suppliers and processors	16	37	35	12
Providing financial assistance to beginning farmers	15	49	31	5
Price and income support	18	50	24	8

Budget Deficits

The federal government's budget deficit has been identified by many as contributing to high interest rates. There are two paths to reducing the deficit -- either raise tax revenues or reduce expenditures on major program areas. We asked the 1,585 randomly selected Iowa farmers their feelings toward increasing tax revenues to reduce the deficit and reducing federal expenditures.

Eleven percent strongly support and an additional 26% somewhat support raising taxes to reduce the deficit (Table 4). Thirty-two percent strongly oppose and an additional 20% somewhat oppose raising taxes. Eleven percent were undecided.

Sixty-eight percent of Iowa's farmers support reducing federal government expenditures on defense. Twenty-three percent opposed this measure, and the remaining 9% were uncertain.

Fifty-nine percent were supportive of reducing expenditures on social programs. Twenty-four percent were opposed to cuts in social programs and 17% were undecided.

Forty-seven percent supported reducing outlays for agricultural price supports and 35% opposed reductions. Almost one-fifth (18%) were uncertain about reducing expenditures for price supports.

Of the four areas, social security had the smallest proportion of respondents who supported reducing federal expenditures. About one-third (35%) support reducing government expenditures on social security. Almost one-half (48%) were opposed to cuts in the social security program and 17% were uncertain.

While there were varying opinions among farmers on reducing the federal budget deficit, there was modest support for raising taxes and making further program cuts. Reducing defense spending received the strongest support of the four program areas included in the survey.

Table 4. Support for reducing the federal government's budget deficit.

Option	Strongly Support	Somewhat Support	Uncertain	Somewhat Oppose	Strongly Oppose
	- - - - - - - - - - - - percent - - - - - - - - - - - -				
Increasing taxes to reduce the deficit	11	26	11	20	32
Reducing expenditures on:					
Defense	38	30	9	13	10
Social programs	30	29	17	15	9
Agricultural price supports	15	32	18	21	14
Social Security	14	21	17	23	25

Opinions on New Technology

New technology historically has been researched and made available without asking potential or actual users their opinions of it. The assumption was that adoption or use of new technology was an indication that farmers "liked" it. However, new technology often involves complex and sophisticated management systems. Some of the latest technology involves questions about ethics and some argue that science has "gone too far". Farmers were asked to indicate their opinion on recent technological developments using a five-point scale ranging from strongly support to strongly oppose.

More than 90% of the farmers in the survey either strongly or somewhat support energy production from feed grains and the use of conservation tillage (Table 5). Seventy-nine percent support energy production from livestock wastes, although 16% were uncertain.

Recombinant DNA research on plants was strongly supported by 26% and somewhat supported by an additional 42%. Seven percent were opposed to recombinant DNA research on plants. One-fourth (25%) were uncertain about this technology.

There was somewhat less support for recombinant DNA research on livestock. Twenty percent were strongly supportive

Table 5. Opinions on new technology.

Technology	Strongly Support	Somewhat Support	Uncertain	Somewhat Oppose	Strongly Oppose
	- - - - - - - - - - - - percent - - - - - - - - - - - -				
Energy production from feed grains and oils	57	34	7	1	1
Conservation tillage farming methods	55	35	5	4	1
Energy production from livestock wastes	39	40	16	3	2
Recombinant DNA research (genetic engineering research):					
on plants	26	42	25	5	2
on livestock	20	43	27	6	4
on humans	9	20	35	13	23
Personal computers for farm families	13	40	26	12	9
Confinement livestock facilities	12	38	20	20	10
Robotics (computer assisted machinery) for on farm use	7	24	28	21	20

and 43% were somewhat supportive of livestock DNA research. Twenty-seven percent were uncertain and 10% were opposed to recombinant DNA research on livestock.

However, when asked about recombinant DNA research on humans, there was a marked decline in level of support. Only nine percent were strongly supportive and 20% somewhat supportive of DNA recombinant research on humans. Slightly over one-third (35%) were uncertain about this research and almost one-third (36%) opposed DNA research on humans.

The conclusion is clear -- recombinant DNA research is more acceptable on plants and animals than when involving humans.

Personal computers for farm families were viewed as beneficial by slightly over one-half of the respondents (53%). Twenty-six percent were undecided about farm computers and one-fifth (21%) were opposed to them.

Opinions on confinement livestock facilities were mixed. Fifty percent supported this relatively new technology. One-fifth (20%) were uncertain about livestock confinement buildings and almost one-third (30%) were either somewhat or strongly opposed.

Robotics, defined as computer assisted machinery for on farm use also received a mixed reaction. About one-third (31%) were supportive, 41% were opposed and 28% were uncertain about robotics.

Of the nine recent technological developments, four were opposed by at least 20% of the respondents. Robotics (41%), recombinant DNA research on humans (36%), confinement livestock facilities (30%), and personal computers (21%) were opposed by significant numbers of farmers. These findings suggest the need for more research and understanding on what is objectionable to these technologies.

Financial Conditions in Farming

Some farm families today are faced with severe financial problems. However, there is considerable disagreement over the magnitude of the problem. To better understand the seriousness of the problem, we asked farmers to report the value of their farm assets and liabilities.

Asset Distribution

Assets were measured by asking respondents to provide the estimated market value of their land, machinery, buildings and livestock as of January 1, 1984. The smallest farms, those with assets less than $50,000, represented six percent of the farms and held .3% of the total asset value (Table 6). The next larger category, those with assets of $50,001 to $100,000, represented 12.5% of the farms and held 1.4% of the assets.

About one-third (28.2%) of Iowa farms had assets of $150,000 or less and held only 4.7% of the total assets. The next quartile (24.4%), which represents farms with assets valued between $150,001 and $300,000, held almost 13% of the assets.

Farms with assets valued between $300,001 and $500,000 represented nearly 22% of all farms and held about 21% of the total agricultural assets. Those farms with assets between $500,000 and one million dollars represent about 18% of the farms and accounted for 30% of the assets.

Farms with one million or more in assets were 7.3% of all farms and they account for 30.6% of the total assets.

In summary, the largest farms, those with $500,000 or more in assets, represent 25.6% of all farms and own 61% of the total agricultural assets.

Debt Distribution

Almost one-fourth (23.7%) of the farms in the sample reported they were debt free (Table 7). About one-third

Table 6. Distribution of assets among Iowa farmers -- January 1, 1984.

Assets per farm	Number of Farms Reporting	Percent of Farms Reporting	Total Amount of Assets ($1,000)	Percent of Assets
		- - - - - - - - - - Percent - - - - - - - - - -		
Less than $50,000	69	6.0%	$ 1,726	.3%
50,001 to $100,000	144	12.5	6,808	1.4
$100,001 to $150,000	111	9.7	14,638	3.0
$150,001 to $200,000	115	10.0	21,276	4.3
$200,001 to $300,000	166	14.4	44,020	8.9
$300,001 to $400,000	139	12.1	50,738	10.3
$400,001 to $500,000	112	9.7	53,337	10.8
$500,001 to $600,000	83	7.3	47,016	9.5
$600,001 to $700,000	37	3.2	24,776	5.0
$700,001 to $800,000	35	3.0	27,174	5.5
$800,001 to $1,000,000	55	4.8	51,401	10.4
Over $1,000,000	84	7.3	151,110	30.6
	1,150	100.0	494,020	100.0

Table 7. Distribution of liabilities among Iowa farmers -- January 1, 1984.

Liability per farm	Number of Farms Reporting	Percent of Farms Reporting	Total Amount of Liabilities ($1,000)	Percent of Liabilities
No debt	276	23.7%	0	0%
$1 - $10,000	101	8.7	$ 630	.4%
$10,001 - $25,000	99	8.5	1,865	1.1
$25,001 - $50,000	136	11.7	5,420	3.2
$50,001 - $100,000	164	14.0	12,585	7.4
$100,001 - $150,000	97	8.3	12,649	7.4
$150,001 - $200,000	65	5.6	12,013	7.1
$200,001 - $300,000	78	6.7	20,123	11.8
$300,001 - $400,000	47	4.0	16,892	9.9
$400,001 - $500,00	38	3.2	17,730	10.4
$500,001 or more	66	5.6	70,161	41.3
	1,167	100.0	170,068	100.0

(28.9%) reported liabilities less than $50,001. Liabilities included all loans for land, machinery, buildings and livestock.

Those with debts less than $50,001, held only 4.7% of the total state agricultural debt. Fourteen percent reported indebtedness between $50,001 and $100,000, which was 7.4% of the total.

Nearly 14% of Iowa farmers have debts between $100,000 and $200,000 which is about 14% of the total state agricultural debt. Nearly 14% of Iowa farmers have debts between $200,000 and $500,000, which is 32.1% of the total debt. Those farms with $500,001 or more in liabilities represented 5.6% of all farms, but held 41.3% of the total agricultural debt.

Nearly 52% of the total indebtedness is held by 9% of the farms, those with debts of $400,001 or more. At the other end of the scale, 23.7% do not have any debts and an additional 28.9 percent have debts less than $50,000.

Debt-to-Asset Ratios of Iowa Farms

Another useful indicator of the farm financial conditions is to examine debt-to-asset ratios. Debt-to-asset ratios are calculated by dividing the amount of liabilities by the value of the assets. The resulting ratio is the dollars owed for each 100 dollars of assets. Thus with a debt to asset ratio of 30, for every 100 dollars of assets, the borrower owes 30 dollars (or 30%). Table 8 provides the debt-to-asset ratios for Iowa farmers.

Twenty-one percent of Iowa farms reported no debts, and these farms own about 15% of the assets. The next low-debt category are those with debt-to-asset ratios less than 11%. This category represents about 14% of all farms; they own about 14% of the assets and are liable for about 2% of the debts.

Farms with debt ratios between 11 and 40% represented almost 31% of all farms, with one-third (33%) of the assets and nearly 24% of the debt.

In the 41-70 percent debt-to-asset category, almost 22% of the farms held about 28% of the assets and 44% of the debt.

Previous financial analysis suggests that those in high debt positions are most vulnerable to high interest rates.

Table 8. Summary of debt-to-asset ratios among Iowa farmers.

Ratio	Number of Farms Reporting	Percent of Farms Reporting	Total Amount of Assets ($1,000)	Percent of Assets	Amount of Liabilities ($1,000)	Percent of Liabilities
No debt	238	21.2	74,402	15.2	0	0
1% - 10%	161	14.4	66,986	13.7	3,510	2.1
11% - 40%	345	30.8	162,035	33.0	40,269	23.8
41% - 70%	244	21.8	135,587	27.6	74,172	43.9
71% - 80%	44	3.9	21,115	4.3	15,994	9.5
81% - 90%	32	2.8	12,275	2.5	10,561	6.2
91% or More	57	5.1	18,372	3.7	24,524	14.5
	1,121	100.0	490,772	100.0	169,030	100.0

Generally, a 70% debt-to-asset ratio or greater is considered to be risky. About 12% of Iowa farms have ratios of 70% or greater. That group owns about 11% of the assets, and holds about 30% of the state agricultural debt.

Perceptions of Financial Problem

In addition to financial data on their farms, respondents were asked: "How do you feel about the current financial condition of Iowa farmers?" Two-thirds (67%) felt it was a very serious problem (Table 9). One-fourth (25%) indicated it was a moderate problem; 4% felt is was a slight problem; 2% felt it was not a problem and 2% were not sure (Table 9).

Thirty-nine percent felt that agribusiness firms in their area face a very serious problem and 40% felt it was a moderate problem.

About one-half of the respondents also voiced concern about the financial condition of local financial institutions. Fourteen percent felt that local financial institutions face a very serious problem and an additional one-third (32%) felt there was a moderate problem.

When asked their level concern for their own farm's financial condition, 42% reported they are "very concerned" and an additional one-fourth (24%) said they are "moderately concerned". Seventeen percent reported they are "slightly concerned" about tneir farm's financial condition and 16 percent responded they are "not concerned". Only one percent were not sure about their farm's financial condition.

Much concern over the financial health of agriculture exists among farmers (Table 9). Ninety-two percent felt the

Table 9. Perceptions of the farm financial condition.

	Not Sure	Not a Problem	A Slight Problem	A Moderate Problem	A Very Serious Problem
	- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - Percent - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -				
How do you feel about the current financial condition:					
of Iowa farmers?	2	2	4	25	67
of agribusiness firms in your area?	6	4	11	40	39
of financial institutions in your area?	12	19	23	32	14

	Not Sure	Not Concerned	Slightly Concerned	Moderately Concerned	Very Concerned
How concerned are you about your farm's financial condition?	1	16	17	24	42

financial condition of Iowa farmers was a moderate or serious problem. Seventy-nine percent felt that agribusiness firms in their area had a moderate or serious problem. Forty-six percent of the farmers in the survey felt that local lenders had a moderate or serious financial problem.

Table 10. Relationship between debt-to-asset ratio and level of concern.

Area of Concern Degree	No Debt (N=237)	Less than 40% (N=503)	40-70% (N=236)	70% or More (N=140)
	- - - - - - - - - - - - percent - - - - - - - - - - - -			
For Iowa Farmers				
Not a problem	5	1	0	0
Slight problem	7	6	1	0
Moderate problem	42	29	17	9
Very serious problem	41	62	81	91
Not sure	5	2	1	0
	100	100	100	100
For Local Agribusiness				
Not a problem	5	3	1	4
Slight problem	14	13	9	4
Moderate problem	49	42	34	35
Very serious problem	23	37	53	56
Not sure	9	5	3	1
	100	100	100	100
For Local Lenders				
Not a problem	23	22	17	12
Slight problem	23	26	21	22
Moderate problem	30	31	39	35
Very serious problem	9	11	15	25
Not sure	15	10	8	6
	100	100	100	100
For Own Farm				
Not a problem	45	17	1	1
Slight problem	26	22	9	4
Moderate problem	18	29	25	10
Very serious problem	10	31	65	85
Not sure	1	1	0	0
	100	100	100	100

Two-thirds (66%) of the farmers surveyed were either very concerned (42%) or moderately concerned (24%) about their own farm financial condition.

Debt-to-asset ratios were strongly related to operators' perceptions of the problem--the higher the ratio, the more one was concerned about the financial conditions (Table 10).

Ninety-one percent of those operators with 70% or more debt felt Iowa farmers face a very serious problem,compared to 41% for those farmers with no debt. Concern about the seriousness of the problem faced by agribusiness increases with debt ratios, although not as dramatically.

The higher one's debt load, the more likely one was to indicate lenders face a very serious problem. Twenty-five percent of the farmers with debt-to-asset ratios of 70% or more said local lenders face a very serious problem, compared to 9% of those with no debt.

The relationship between debt ratio and level of concern about one's farm is quite dramatic. Eighty-five percent of those in the 70% or more debt category indicated they were very concerned about their farm's financial condition, compared to 10% of those without debt.

Job Satisfaction with Farming

Despite the difficult and serious financial problems of farming, respondents were generally satisfied with their occupation. They were asked: "All in all, how satisfied would you say you are with your job as a farmer?" Forty-one percent said very satisfied and another 39% replied somewhat satisfied. Only 16% indicated they were dissatisfied as farmers -- 12% somewhat dissatisfied and 4% very dissatisfied. Four percent were undecided.

As a follow-up, we asked: "How much of the time do you feel satisfied with your job as a farmer?" Fourteen percent said they were satisfied "all of the time" and 58% said "a good deal of the time". About one in five (18%) indicated they felt satisfied with their job "about half of the time" and seven percent said "occasionally". Only two percent said they were "practically never" satisfied and one percent were uncertain about their feelings.

Almost three-fourths (72%) of the respondents said if they had to do it over again, they would still choose to be a farmer. Fourteen percent said they would not choose farming if they could make the decision again. The remaining 14% were uncertain as to whether they would choose farming again.

Twenty-nine percent said they would recommend farming to a friend. However, 44% indicated they would not recommend farming. Almost one-fourth (27%) were undecided.

As a final measure of job satisfaction, respondents were asked if they had enough money to live comfortably, would they continue farming. Almost two-thirds (62%) said they would continue farming, 11% were not sure and 27% said they would not continue farming.

Retirement Plans

The latest Census of Agriculture (1982) reports that 35% of Iowa farmers are 55 years or older. In the March, 1983 Farm and Rural Life Poll, 17% of the respondents indicated they were planning to retire from farming in the next five years. In this survey we asked farm operators about their retirement plans and opinions about retirement.

Forty-four percent of those surveyed said they look forward to retirement. Almost one-third (29%) indicated they dislike the idea of retirement and 27% responded they had not thought about it.

These opinions were also reflected in

farmers' retirement plans. One-third (34%) said they do not expect to ever retire. An additional 12% were not sure whether they would ever retire. Fifty-four percent are planning for eventual retirement. Of those who intend to retire, five percent were planning to retire at before age 60; 30% were planning to retire at age 65; 16% were planning to retire between 66 and 70; the remaining five percent plan to retire after 70.

Forty percent indicated the economic events in the last two years have delayed their retirement plans. Almost one-third (31%) of the respondents who own land are planning to let their child or children take over their land when they retire.

Thirteen percent said they would sell their land to their child or children. Forty-three percent are planning to retain ownership of their land and cash rent it to a tenant (19%) or rent it on a crop-share basis (24%). Eight percent said they would sell their land to the highest bidder when they retire.

Table 11. Respondents' opinions about retirement.

Opinion	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Uncertain	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	percent				
Most people look forward to retirement as something very enjoyable	23	56	12	8	1
For most people, retirement is an opportunity to do things they have always wanted to do but never had the time to do	32	52	7	7	2
Retirement is a goal for which most people are willing to sacrifice and work hard	22	47	14	13	4
When a person retires, his/her health is apt to decline	11	48	16	20	5
It is better not to think about retirement	9	14	17	35	25
When a person retires, he/she has one foot in the grave	3	10	9	28	50
Retirement is something to be avoided as long as possible	8	20	15	37	20
Those who retire should consider themselves lucky	16	35	21	21	7

Opinions about Retirement

Farmers generally agreed that "most people look forward to retirement" (79%) and that "retirement is an opportunity to do things they have always wanted to do but never had the time to do" (84%). Farmers also agreed that "retirement is a goal for which people are willing to sacrifice and work hard'"(69%). While 59% of the respondents agreed that, "when a person retires, his/her health is apt to decline," 25% disagreed (Table 11).

Farmers tended to disagree "it is better not to think about retirement" (60%); and "when a person retires, he/she has one foot in the grave" (78%); and "retirement is something to be avoided as long as possible" (57%). Respondents were divided whether "those who retire should consider themselves lucky"; 51% agreed and 28% disagreed.

Forty-seven percent felt that adjusting to retirement will be very difficult for them (10%) or somewhat difficult (36%). Ten percent said retirement will be very easy for them and 25% said retirement would be somewhat easy. The remaining 19% were uncertain as to how difficult retirement will be.

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